THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

OL. II. SCHENECTADY, N. Y., MARCH, 1940 No. 3

valuating nglish Teachers

As a result of the newly formed A, I have hopes that at least two damental problems will sooner later receive long-overdue con-eration. At present there is no dium through which they can be cussed, but it is practically cer-n that an association of college chers must not only face them recognize the need for solu-ns.

1.) Under conditions such as y are now at most liberal arts leges, teachers are given pre-inary evaluation on the basis the doctoral degrees they hold or on an estimation of their rness to such degrees. This is ecially true if they have had le or no teaching experience; whether or not teaching ex-ience is considered, the Ph. D. ys a very important part. This ree is, to a great extent, a earch degree. The course of dy leading up to this degree is refore, I believe, not adequate intelligent preparation for the cher of literature. Many of the ails in our graduate-school sys-n are open to critical study and ision . . . So much for one prob-, to which my next point may ve as supporting argument.

2.) It is the emphasis upon earch that complicates the issue. r liberal arts colleges, before sidering the promotion of a ng instructor, too often look his publications as a criterion his worth; and these publica-ns represent research. (There numerous outlets for this type scholarship, and the young in-uctor naturally turns to one of se scholarly journals with his icle—which has been conceived pain and given birth to after tracted labor, accompanied by ne incidental financial expense.) rhaps his material is valuable certain fields of scholarly inves-ation, but it is extremely un-ely that it has any bearing atever upon his teaching in the rature courses which must be, er all, his main interest and thusiasm. The paradox is ob-us enough. In order to "get ead" in teaching, he must devote great deal of energy and long mmers of time to exacting re-rch which has no relation to the mediate demands of his profes-n—the teaching (i.e., the criti-m and interpretation) of Eng-h Literature in the classroom. analogy, which, for all I know, y be somewhat trite, suggests lf at this point. The best gen-l practitioners of medecine (and m not concerned with the bed-e manner he may have acquired a Medical School of Education, uch exists) are not found in the oratories of Johns Hopkins—nor were they, in the old days, in those of Freiburg or Tubingen. For practicing physicians know (and medical schools emphasize this) that their life is of necessity devoted to patients, and that their knowledge must have broad and human application. (Osler himself, the patron sain of Hopkins, is an apt and supreme example of this type of doctor.) Intensive work, practical and theoretical research goes on—developed by those—and more honor and power to them—whose talents best fit them for highly specialized research. It is through their efforts that medecine extends its sphere of human application. Every doctor should be familiar with laboratory technique, but no one would think of returning all doctors to the highly specialized laboratories of our great hospitals and medical schools . . . Our emphasis upon research, in and out of the M. L. A., represents a movement in a comparable direction. The practical solution is not to be found in Education, with its emphasis on methods. But it is to be found in a more human and realistic attitude toward the actual subject matter of the courses we teach. Literary criticism must be encouraged and developed. The meaning of the term literary criticism in its broadest sense, is one of the issues with which a teachers' organization must be concerned.

—Thomas M. H. Blair.
Kent State Univ., Ohio

The American Language

Dear Editor:

My belief is that teachers of English should try to teach their students to write simple, orthodox English, but that when once so much progress has been made, every student should be encouraged to show as much individuality as he may have. If he inclines toward the pungencies of current speech, I see so reason why he should be discouraged. It is all a question of taste. Shakespeare used the slang of his time very freely, and with great skill. It takes good judgment to employ it without descending to the commonplace of everyday speech, but it certainly can be done. In brief, I believe that in writing English, as in writing music, the orthodox rules should be learnt first, and that after that the pupil should be encouraged to experiment on his own. Now and then, to be sure, his experiments may be failures, but nevertheless it is worth while to make them.

I never hesitate myself to use current slang, but I try, naturally enough, to keep it for appropriate occasions. There are times when it is immensely effective—indeed, there are times when the effect it produces cannot be produced by any other means.

H. L. Mencken

An Extra Course In Narrative

Some years ago when we abandoned the credit system of tallying hours for a degree, I started holding open house one evening a week for students who wished to write stories, poems, plays and informal essays. Tomorrow night the campus poets will descend upon us, but a week ago it was the writers of short stories. Next week the playwrights will appear.

Such a scheme must have a plan in order to succeed because it is supplementary to academic demands upon time. Long ago I discovered that the period between the opening of College in the fall and the Christmas vacation was a natural narrative writing season and I began gathering each fall a group of ten or a dozen students, usually Freshmen or Sophomores, who wished to write short stories. I planned for them a quick intensive course in narrative, one hour a week, before the door was opened

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In a Classroom

All the time I am talking, I am talking to you.
Trying to make it true.
I am trying to say, Be sure.
Endure. It will be the way you want it.
I am remembering when I was wild, too;
Secret; rich; unknown
Except to one friend; even then alone.
I am asking you what you want to be,
Asking you what you want of me,
Telling you there is no one, nothing,
Ever to fear.
And wondering if you hear.

—John Holmes, Tufts College

A Credo for Composition

A young professor once remarked, when asked the purpose of the introductory literature course of which he was director, "After all, you don't have to figure out your relation to God and the universe before you begin living." I answer, "This is precisely the one thing that you must do before you begin teaching; otherwise you are not fit to teach." It is largely because so few instructors in freshman composition have bothered to "figure out" a philosophy, that the course is so widely regarded by both teachers and students as an unmitigated although inescapable evil.

It is partly an effect and partly a cause of this prevalent and often cynical professorial agnosticism that most freshman composition courses are rigidly organized and hopelessly mechanized. Lest students and instructors attempt to shirk a task in which they see no purpose, they must all be bound by a syllabus and prevented as far as possible from the pursuit of values that cannot be measured objectively at the end of the course. And the result of this system is emphasis on form instead of substance, on discipline instead of achievement—in short, an attempt to teach composition in a vacuum.

Now, I submit that the aim and justification of freshman composition is not, except incidentally, the mastery of a technique; it is to stimulate and discipline students' minds, to make them rational and articulate creatures, to arouse in them the desire for intellectual integrity. Without reference to this ultimate aim, the ability to write effectively, even if it can be acquired, is barren. And I contend, further, that there is but one way to achieve this aim; get together a group of instructors who care about the end stated and will therefore enjoy teaching the course, and who can be trusted not to spare themselves or their students from the arduous labor that a course in composition demands of both teacher and learner—and then turn them loose. Let them use their own judgment about quantity and kind of reading and writing; let them stress forensics or fantasy; let them use for models the works of John Milton or the works of John Steinbeck.

This scheme, together with my own application of it (which I should never think of forcing on anybody else), springs also from recognition of two basic difficulties in teaching freshman composition. One is that learning to write is a long and slow and often painful process. There may be some inspired authors whose writings are easy and unpremeditated; but for most of us the excellence

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DEC 11 1941

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Vitarium meorum evacuatio
[concupiscentiae et libidinum exterminatio]
Caritatis et patientiae
Humilitatis et oboedientiae
Omniumque virtutum augmentatio.

Editorial

Not long ago the press directed public attention toward some professor of English, somewhere, who was requiring his students to write limericks. It is not unusual for the press to make minor incidents a matter for public concern; but the exploitation of this bit of campus gossip seemed to imply disparagement of the limerick as a form of literature.

There are, to be sure, limericks and limericks; and it is possible that a newspaper-man's stock-in-trade might be especially lacking in academic dignity. At the head of this column, however, stands a limerick prayer by St. Thomas Aquinas in churchly Latin; and there was once a quaint use of the same verse-form by the Church of England for the teaching of the catechism. Yet why deny that the form itself has an inherent pertness or impudence which makes it a poor vehicle for earnest thought or lofty sentiment?

Robert Frost once remarked (and we humbly beg him not to fail us by denial now) that certain tribal rhythms still have power to influence our pulse-beats, and that the poet does well to apply them to his high purposes. Whether or not we are quoting fairly, there is food for speculation in the thought that for more than seven centuries a formula of fourteen iambic pentameter lines and a rhyme-scheme of a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a-c-d-e-c-d-e, or slight variations therefrom, has wielded a mysterious power, and living poets still find it a satisfying vehicle for their fairest glimpses of truth or beauty. Rondel, villanelle and triolet have lilted gaily through the centuries, and all of our modern experimentation in formlessness has not yet quenched their dancing fires.

Hasty research informs us that shortly before the eighteenth century convivial young blades in Ireland were wont to improvise five-line stanzas, as they sat around the board, and after each had sung his improvisation, all would join in the chorus, "When we go up to Limerick." But even earlier than that, Ireland's "wild geese" were carrying the same rhythmic pattern to every encampment in Europe. Startled memories stir within us; for we recall the back room of a friendly hostelry in central Massachusetts forty years ago, with college lads seated around a table. Suddenly according to custom one of the company would improvise a limerick exposing the virtues or the frailties of some companion, and when he had sung it, all would join in a chorus which began "Way down on the little Pee Dee." The next in the circle would then be ready with his stanza, and so on; until each had contributed.

What strange magic must there be in a lyric formula of patterned accents and echoing rhymes which causes it to survive through the centuries, carrying a ritual of good fellowship along with it! No student of verse-form or poetic tradition need apologize for permitting its whimsy or its ribaldry to relieve for a moment the solemnity of a Victorian classroom hour. Even the Examining Committee itself might prove its own humanity as well as its intelligence if it permitted some grave young candidate to choose the Origin of the Limerick for his thesis. But such a task would send him to the British Museum as a forlorn hope.

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The college English teachers of New England are to have another meeting of their regional section of CEA; a group in the middle Atlantic states has already organized and met once; and in other sections plans are afoot. But wherever college English teachers meet, whether members or non-members, the question arises, "what is the CEA for?" What it means is an easier question: it means that there are many teachers who wish to write on the record that English in the college curriculum is not just another of the social studies, or a vocational course in the training of teachers. If Literature has a place among the fine arts it must be so taught; criticism leading to trained enjoyment and keener appreciation must have first place, with a realization that a study of social and historic backgrounds and of teaching methods are but hand-maidens of that more important teaching.

What advantage may come from organization is another question. Merely belonging to something does not provide clarity of purpose or enthusiasm, unless there is an exchange of ideas and experiences. The members of CEA realize this, and their letters to the secretary have indicated two attitudes of mind. Many from the first have urged the establishment of a magazine that would serve as a vehicle for that exchange, and also offer our members such a bill-of-fare as is found in the British "Essays and Studies." Others believe that the most practical service can be rendered by encouraging the growth of regional groups which may meet often with the least expenditure of time and expense. There is no reason why both of these devices cannot be realized in time. The membership is growing slowly but steadily, and that means the growth of a treasury-balance. But the establishment of regional branches need not wait upon that. Any group can be brought together wherever there happen to be a few individuals willing to give the time and effort to the business of organizing. This News Letter can be of some assistance to them in announcement and report. But a magazine leaping full-panoplied from the head of CEA is a very different problem. A really great expense is involved, and also there is serious competition. At the present time the directors are authorizing this practical little sheet for the discussion of just such problems, and as a test of the real desire for publication. Why not discover the full extent of its usefulness? Many concisely expressed opinions may find space here. There is room in fact for a critical essay or two. Let us hear from more of our members.

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Renaissance

A Review

The University of Toronto has brought distinguished scholars to its campus in successive years to deliver the Alexander lectures. Among these have been Professor Cazamian of the Sorbonne, Professor Garrod of Oxford, Professor Babbitt of Harvard, Sir William Craigie of Chicago, Sir Herbert Grierson, and Professor Sedgwick of British Columbia. Last year Professor Douglas Bush of Harvard delivered four lectures on The Renaissance and English Humanism, and these have been issued in book form from the University of Toronto Press.* The four chapters are Modern Theories of the Renaissance, Continental Humanism, English Humanism, and Milton. There is a rarely readable quality about these papers, despite their erudition. Perhaps the lack of footnotes and documentation and the existence of a conversational style add to the charm of the book. A few paragraphs quoted from Professor Bush's final pages are irresistible for our purposes.

"The modern world, apart from proletarian authors, has long abandoned the didactic and religious view of literature, and the result has been irresponsible journalism on the one hand and irresponsible scholarship on the other. When literature ceases to be studied as a guide to life, the zest for discovery begins. We might say that the appearance of Bentley marked the death of Renaissance humanism in England. In recent times we have witnessed the virtual extinction of the classics, and at present even the modern humanities are yielding ground daily to the social sciences. With much help from external enemies we English scholars are toiling mightily to bring about the death of English; it is a quaint thought that if many of us had lived during the Renaissance we would have been unregenerate Scotists, wrapped up in our quiddities. We may survive for a time as a somewhat vermiform appendix to economics and sociology, and we may be of use in translating the writings of professors of education into English, but one may wonder, timidly, if a real revival of the humanities might not be inaugurated by a moratorium on productive scholarship—not too long a moratorium, since good teaching and writing do not grow out of soil that is never stirred up, but long enough to restore our perspective and sense of values. What a golden interlude we might have, with the learned journals temporarily withdrawn, with no scholarly lucubrations to read or write, no annual bibliographies to torment us with hundreds of things we must know if we are to be qualified to lead hopeful young men into the same labyrinth, with nothing to do in short, but sit down in peace with the great books we ought to be soaking in! I did not intend to turn evangelist, and I must say that this mood, which may seem pathological, is really much more confessional than hortatory. But since I have gone so far in what may be called "sharing," I may mention a minute personal circumstance which is determined by the exigencies of wall space in my small study, but might also be taken as a spiritual allegory. In front of my desk are serried rows of card-indexes, bibliographies, and periodicals. Out of sight behind me are Holbein's portraits of Erasmus and More. "Saint Socrates, pray for us."

*The Renaissance and English Humanism by Douglas Bush; University of Toronto Press. 134 pp. and index. Price $1.50.

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Writing for Oral Presentation

In my experimental section of Rhetoric 1 I have twenty-four students, each of whom has received a grade on the placement test that places him, with reference to his writing ability, in the lowest third of the freshman class (the part of the class that is regularly put into the so-called Special Sections of Rhetoric 1). My general purpose is to make these students better writers by having them write for oral presentation and oral criticism. The students are asked to write papers each of which can be read aloud in three to four minutes, and then to read their papers aloud, submitting them to oral criticism from the instructor and from classmates.

I endeavor strongly to build up and maintain a group spirit of mutual helpfulness in the class. We sit around a table, in order that every member can see and be seen by every other member, and in order that the instructor and his students may seem to be working together, on the same level. The chairs are movable, and there are no assigned seats. In every way I try to make each student feel that the intesest and the participating effort of each individual are of value to every other individual in the group.

About eight students can read their papers aloud and receive oral criticism of them during the course of one class period.

No textbooks are used in the class. Two reference books are required: (1) *A Freshman Guide to*

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The Educational Issue

The message of our retiring president, Mr. Robert M. Gay, printed in the January *News Letter* outlines thoughtfully the important issues that are likely to come before this association. One issue which he mentions is the criticism of English which is coming from the schools of education. Those of us who are in teachers' colleges are probably most conscious of this problem. Mr. Carleton Brown's presidential address to the Modern Language Association in 1936, "The Attack on the Castle," though it deals also with the arguments of the social scientists, shows the utilitarian line of thinking taken by the schools of education and how it may be answered.

In part, the educational criticism springs from the age-old pressure for practical results. That goes back to Francis Bacon. Our modern Baconians, with their attempts to raise standards of living often ignore the fact that culture and taste do not supervene immediately when surcease from anxiety, leisure, and security take the place of their opposites in human existence. More recently, the practical criticism has been strengthened by science and the new philosophies that have grown out of it. Much great literature, on the other hand, is allied with the idealistic tradition coming from Plato through Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, and Browning down to a modern poet like Robert Bridges.

The educational attack on idealistic literature is grounded on John Dewey's philosophy of experimentalism, perhaps best expressed in his *Democracy and Education* One direction that the English teachers' defense of their position might take is suggested by Mr. Herman H. Horne's commentary on Dewey's book, which answers it from the viewpoint of idealism. One should notice that the National Council of Teachers of English inclines toward the educational viewpoint, as shown by their publications, *An Experience Curriculum in English* and *A Correlated Curriculum* The report of Mr. Howard Mumford Jones for the Modern Language Association's committee on trends in education, in 1937, is a good summary of the attacks upon college English by (1) the Progressive Education Association, (2) schools of education, (3) the National Council of Teachers of English, and (4) social scientists. It would obviously be well for the College English Association to work closely with the Modern Language Association on this matter. But above all, we need to put our work on a sound philosophical basis. The divine Dewey has gone largely unanswered. We can be thankful for new points of view contributed by pragmatism, but John Henry Newman's case for knowledge as an end in itself is in constant need of restatement. What will become of English teaching if people cease to believe that the health of the soul is an end in itself?

Literature, of course, could be justified solely on the grounds of its contribution to the solution of social problems. But even there, the present emphasis on contemporary issues needs to be corrected by an attempt to get some critical standard or insight from tradition to bring to bear on these pressing problems. Mr. Erich A. Walter's book, *Toward Today*, and similar books show how important it is in treating current problems to trace their history and to see what attempts have been made to solve them in the past.

But literature is primarily art, and a more serious issue, it seems to me, is the attempt of the experimentalists to reduce literature to mere experience, or interaction between the artist and his environment, much as psychology is often made nothing but stimulus and response. Plato's theory of ideas as ideals and Aristotle's theory of the imitation of a type are ignored by the experimentalists, who believe in no ideas that do not spring from an immediate situation. We all know the effects of scientific realism on art; and the naturalism of Conrad, Hardy, and later writers is widely acclaimed. But if the appreciation of great art is to continue, there is certainly need for restating the philosophic basis of the great tradition. This must be done in modern terms, reconciling idealism and realism, giving science and pragmatism their dues, and yet showing the limitations of science and the needs for ideals and standards in literature.

J. Gordon Eaker
Kansas State Teachers College of Pittsburg

A Credo for Composition

(Continued from Page 1)

of a composition is usually in direct proportion to the length and intensity of the drudgery that produced it. The second is that, whereas we may find an adequate reward in having said well something that we wanted to say, Freshman John Jones, sitting at the end of the first row, whose exclusive interests at the moment (like those of many of his elders) are sports and sex, has nothing whatever that he wants to say badly enough to face the unpleasant task of trying to say it well.

The answer is, "Give him something to think about." It ought to be encouraging that freshmen soon weary of writing about "My First Fishing Trip" or "My Favorite Sport." After all, they have minds; they are "rationis capaces"; if they are ever to begin to think, now is the time. Why not shove them at once into the mazes, however bewildring at first, of ideas — about education, about government, about war and peace, about religion and science, about literature and art; in a word, about the things that really matter?

Two doubts are likely to arise regarding such a program: first, whether students will approach topics of such high seriousness with any more alacrity than they show in discussing fraternities or fishing trips; and second, whether encouraging students to express freely and confidently their own views upon such topics will not contribute to the superficiality and conceit that are already only too evident in the vociferous proposals of many current youth organizations for "saving" a world of which their elders are declared to have "made a mess."

These doubts are not unfounded. But to the real teacher they are not a deterrent but a challenge. Let him fling himself in the fray without restraint, bombarding with ridicule and invective the strongholds of inertia and conventionality, kindling with his own faith an answering belief in the great creed of Socrates that "the unexamined life is not worth living;" through denunciation or affirmation provoking or inspiring his students to the utterance and defense of their own prejudices and convictions; by ruthless criticism compelling them to use and respect logic; and finally, by clear hard thinking on his own part, by willingness to listen as well as speak, by humor and by sympathy, making them see the need, in any life worthy of a human being, first of scepticism and then of faith — of the will and power first to see clearly and then to believe passionately.

Does it seem fantastic that freshman composition, so often a curricular outcast, should be regarded as an instrument in the development of free spirits, who will dare to oppose the mass-mindedness, the evasion of responsibility, the despicable concern to save our own material possessions that are apparently coming to dominate America today? Perhaps it is fantastic. But what else, in the end, is it worth a teacher's while to try to do?

Ellsworth Barnard, Williams Coll.

An Extra Course in Narrative

(Continued from Page 1)

to the general writing public.

The first step is the answering of an autobiographical questionnaire which probes as deep as one may dare. The purpose is to make each would-be writer explore his factual and emotional past and see the whole of his life to date in perspective. A conference of an hour or more serves to ask for meanings and relations between the elements in this experience. Then follows a series of eight or ten short sketches which draw on the material thus unearthed.

Writing is the imaginative use of observation and memory, in order to find a meaning in experience. First we try to recapture the earliest memories that remain vivid and are important merely because they remain. Why does the childish memory hold so tenaciously to such peculiar and apparently trivial facts? The day my brother was born I had to stay home because there was no one to take me to school; Father did not buy me the stick-candy I wanted that day he took me to the circus; I ate the end off a loaf of bread when mother sent me to the store. Some of the reasons why people are as they are come out of such revelations. Later memories follow; then character sketches of members of the family, descriptive sketches of moments when nature first seemed to be something in itself; of moments when social man first reared his ugly or beautiful head. The creative process begins with problems such as putting oneself into an incident that happened to a friend and reconstructing it; changing the place in which something happened; otherwise moulding the memory so that it may say more than experience could. Finally, there is discussion of conflict, within the self between two people, between people and circumstance. This leads to some thought about human motivation, and a point of view toward narrative writing is established. It is safe at this point to turn to the technique of the short story and to the many good books on the subject. A brief review of the minimum technical requirements of the form and an analysis of one or two classic stories completes the preliminary training.

Short stories follow if there is time for them in the crowded academic life. But Christmas vacation has come and there are other things to think about. The fruit may not be ready to fall, but the seed has been planted. Even those who never write have a point of view for the evaluation of the things that have happened to them, and the other things that are going to happen.

Robert E. Spiller
Swarthmore College

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PERSONAL

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Young eastern college teacher has agreed to teach in a west coast university throughout the summer session, and will take his wife along. He would be glad to share driving and travel expense with some other couple finding themselves in a similar situation. Good conversationalists preferred, but not too good. (A-1)

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes, please: only a living wage in return for honest teaching. Age, 32. Getting Ph.D. from Cornell "with distinction"; A. B. and M. A. from Stanford; five years' university teaching experience; published articles; good health; good disposition; good wife. (B-1)

Man, 32, married, Ph. D. from Mid-Western university, seven years' college teaching experience. Publications of general as well as scholarly interest. Yankee individualist, desires position in a department where the teaching of English is taken seriously, and where a teacher is not unwelcome for having ideas of his own about his profession nor for being popular with his students and honest with his colleagues. (B-2)

Editor, weary of ephemeral trade books and stifling texts, wants chance to teach college men what literature is, and how to write. Personalia: single; 29; "Anglo-Saxon"; widely read; writing ability; liberal philosophic temper; Columbia M.A. (June); best editorial and academic references. (B-3)

Man, 33, married, graduate prominent Eastern university, English major; four years graduate study all phases dramatic production including play-writing; experienced in teaching and professional theatre. Interested in developing department of drama. (B-4)

Man, 28, single; Yale, Wis. (Experimental Coll.), A.M. from Mich., one year teaching experience at Iowa. Zona Gale Literary Scholar for 5 years. Published essay and poetry; many paid lecture-recitals on modern poetry. Extensive professional experience in play production. Received awards in painting, essay and translation. Professional editor. Wants to teach English in an intimate community where critical and creative functions are inseparable. (B-5)

Man, 28, married, B.A. summa cum laude from eastern college, B.A. and M.A. in English as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, no college teaching experience and no Oxford accent. Desires a position in a department which shares his belief that four years of professional editing and writing, public speaking, and applied research are valuable preparation for teaching. (B-6)

Man, 25, married, B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. this June, having all the academic trappings — honors, BK, etc. All degrees from Ivy League Universities, but not a worshipper of decadent New England tradition. Experience as assistant instructor and tutor, talent for teaching; one publication, more to come. Wants to find a department willing to stake an instructorship on the promise of sure returns."

Writing for Oral Presentation

(Continued from Page 2)

Writing, by Jefferson and Templeman; (2) *Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 5th ed.

From time to time the members of the class are asked to fill out and hand in to the instructor the exercise sheets in a little vocabulary-building workbook by J. E. Norwood, entitled *Concerning Words* The importance of increasing one's vocabulary has been so strongly emphasized during the last few years, by the Human Engineering Laboratories and by various writers, that I feel it quite desirable for the students to make use of this excellent little workbook whose purpose is to help teach students the meaning of English prefixes and suffixes, and the meaning of some of the roots most frequently occurring in English words.

Seventeen papers are required of each student during the semester—the same number required of a student in a non-experimental "special" section of Rhetoric 1. Each paper is to be read aloud in class by its author (later in the semester, sometimes a paper will be read aloud by a student not its author.) The interest and approval of the *audience* are constantly to be sought by the author. Among the topics to be assigned are the following: an objective report of an event that occurred during the previous week; an objective report of *interest to the group*. whether it be a report of news, or of an event of the past, or of fact; a report of an interview; a newspaper editorial; a review of a moving pirture; a review of a book; an essay strongly expressing personal opinion; an essay supporting one side of a controversial question.

During the first few meetings the instructor does most of the criticizing of the papers. He does not hesitate to interrupt a reader at any time, and also makes general comment after the reading of a paper. But he encourages student-members of the group to join in the criticism of a paper, and expects that after a few meetings a large part of the criticism will be done by fellow students.

The final examination for this group will be the same as that given to the non-experimental sections. I shall compare the objective-test grades of my students with the average objective-test grade of all freshmen, on the placement examination given in September and on the final examination in January These comparisons will afford some basis for evaluating the progress of my students.

After six weeks with the class I am much pleased by the operation of the above plan. Here are some specific findings:

(1) Class members rapidly began to criticize each other's work, and the pressure of knowing that classmates would criticize weaknesses, and that everyone would have to read his paper aloud, has made students prepare their work far more carefully than is customary.

(2) During the reading of a paper, the reader will hastily stop, say "That's not right," and correct an error himself in order to forestall the comments or questions of his classmates or instructor.

(3) After a class meeting most students who have read their papers aloud and heard them criticized will voluntarily keep them, as is permitted, until the next class meeting or longer, in order to make revisions.

(4) Although never compelled or even requested to do so, students from time to time bring dictionaries to class.

(5) The poorest speakers have improved greatly in audibility of tone, in enunciation of words, and in self-confidence about reading aloud, and speaking to a group of people. At the repeated insistence of classmates, some poorer readers are becoming less and less guilty of what may be called a "hang-dog" or a "bursting bubble" style of reading aloud.

(6) The first errors that students point out to each other are those that the instructor would wish to have students avoid early: bad logic (lack of common sense!), inaccuracy, bad grammar, mispronunciation, faulty reference, failure to gain a satisfactory totality of effect, and poor speaking.

(7) A sensitive concern for the right word has appeared and is increasing. The vocabulary exercises are in part responsible (though we never spend time in class with them). The instructor needs to check the exercises carefully — at first, severely. Both instructor and students are convinced that vocabulary exercises such as these are desirable.

(8) Far greater improvement could be made by each student if the class were composed of 18 members instead of 24.

I am, of course, keenly interested to find out how the students working under this plan will compare on the basis of the final examination, with students in the other sections of Rhetoric 1.

William D. Templeman
University of Illinois

INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTORS

The News Letter is not only a medium for the exchange of ideas and suggestions, but a vehicle for *brief* critical essays by members. Contributions ranging from a fifty-word telegram to a 900-word flight of contemplative fancy are more than welcome; they are urgently solicited.

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